

Babbitt swears he has no recollection of this exchange. He testified that he has no recollection of Eckstein raising the O'Connor letter, and that he was unaware of the letter and O'Connor's other communications with the White House in July 1995. He further testified that he had no recollection of making any remark about contributions by Indians to Democrats, or any comment concerning half a million dollars in contributions. Indeed, Babbitt swears that he recalls no further details about this meeting than what he has provided in his testimony. *See* Section II.K., *infra*. Yet, Babbitt acknowledges now, as he did in his Senate hearing testimony, that it is "conceivable" he made a remark consistent with the contributions comment Eckstein recalled.⁴⁶⁶

According to Eckstein, at no point in the July 14 meeting – nor at any point before that day – did Babbitt or anyone at Interior indicate to the applicants that Babbitt would be uninvolved in the Hudson decision. Eckstein added that until the issuance of the decision letter, none of the applicants knew the decision would be delegated to an official two steps removed from the Secretary, and none of them had even heard Michael Anderson's name during the entire course of the application.

After Eckstein emerged from his meeting with Secretary Babbitt, he spoke with Goff, who was waiting in a car to take Eckstein to the airport. Goff recounted Eckstein's statement as being that Babbitt "couldn't give [Eckstein] any more time because Harold Ickes called today and said the decision had to go out today."⁴⁶⁷ Goff also recalled that Eckstein said he had tried to talk about the merits of the case, but Secretary Babbitt said that "there was too much money

⁴⁶⁶Babbitt G.J. Test., July 7, 1999, at 156-58.

⁴⁶⁷OIC Goff Int., Aug. 25, 1998, at 16.